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1 1982
VOLUME 21
JANUARY

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"PEACE, A GIFT FROM GOD"
1982 World Day of Peace

A DEEPENING UNITY
Chiara Lubich visits Germany

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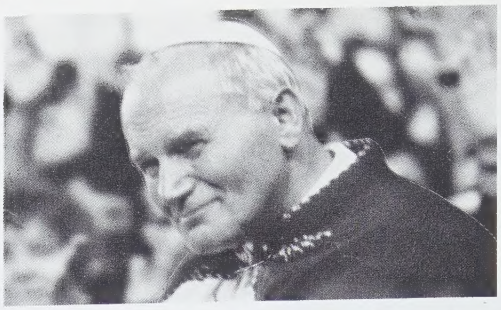

2 *1982 WORLD DAY OF PEACE: Pope John Paul II, continuing the practice begun by Pope Paul VI, consecrated New Year's Day 1982 to the cause of peace, calling on all men and women to recognize that real peace comes only from God.*

4 *ECUMENISM, A DEEPENING UN The fruit of twenty years contact Focolare Movement with the Ev ical Lutheran Church in Germany.*

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HAPPY NEW YEAR WITH LIVING C

Living City is published 11 times a year (10 monthly and a bimonthly issue in August-September) by the Focolare Movement, a non-profit corporation, P.O. Box 496, New York, NY 10021.
Subscription prices for one year: USA and possessions: US$10.00; Canada: US$12.00; Elsewhere: US$18.00; Air Mail (all countries): US$25.00.
An envelope is enclosed in each magazine for subscriptions or renewals. Use this address for subscription orders and inquires: LIVING CITY, P.O. Box 126, Jamaica, NY 11415.
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OTHER EDITIONS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT MAGAZINE

CHINESE: "San Sing Seung Yuet Hong" - 70 loo Road 11 B/F - Kowloon - Hong Kong

DUTCH: "Nieuwe Stad" - St. Stephanusstra - Nijmegen - Holland

ISITING GERMANY: This past Sep-ember, Chiara Lubich met with per-onalities of the Lutheran and Cath-lic Churches and laid the foundation or a series of ecumenical courses.

Chiara Lubich

OUR YES TO GOD

18 *YES IN THE PRESENT: We conclude here our publication of a series of talks given by Chiara Lubich on the "Will of God."*

23 *BRAZIL: THE FORGOTTEN MAJORITY: Side-by-side live two worlds, the well-to-do, and the other, vaster world where poverty reigns. The Church strives to educate both groups as to their responsibilities, and their rights.*

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la - J7Z 5T9

MAN: "Neue Stadt" - Gleissnerstrasse 87 -
Munchen 83 - Germany

ITALIAN: "Città Nuova" - Via degli Scipioni 265 - 00192 Rome - Italy

PORTUGUESE: "Cidade Nova" - Rua Pio XII 274 - Paraiso, Sao Paulo - Brazil

SPANISH:
1. "Ciudad Nueva" - Av. da Rivadavia 4939 - Buenos Aires 24 - Argentina
2. "Ciudad Nueva" - Ferrer del Rio - 1 esc A, 2º 5a Madrid - Spain

OTHER ENGLISH EDITIONS:
1. "New City" - 57 Twyford Avenue - London W3 - England
2. "New City" - P. O. Box 332 - Manila, Philippines
3. "New City" - 367 Balwyn Rd. - Balwyn North 3104 - Australia

1982 World Day of Peace

"PEACE, A GIFT FROM GOD"

Pope John Paul II,
continuing the practice inaugurated by Pope Paul VI in 1968,
consecrated New Year's Day 1982 to the cause of peace,
choosing as its theme: "Peace, a gift from God."

Unlike themes of previous years, which focused on one's personal commitment to work for peace through truth, justice or reconciliation, this year's theme calls on mankind to recognize that the source of peace is God himself.

The theme is intended to stress God's intervention in our lives. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil" (Ps.127:1). This perspective puts in relief that only in the light of religious principles and postulates of transcendence can man reach full understanding of himself and of his neighbor. This is the only way mankind can establish that common solidarity capable of creating the well-ordered progress of human society through relationships based on truth, justice, love and freedom.

This specific contribution made by religion in general and the Church in particular to the cause of peace is supremely valid and illuminating. Any other view of the world and of the issues of peace which ignores or denies man's orientation towards eternal realities, will never be able to provide nations with the solid foundation for secure and truly lasting peace.

To mankind which bears the marks of hatred, injustice, war and fratricidal terrorism, religion repeats that God created all human beings as brothers and sisters, equal in nature and dignity. Furthermore, the Church recalls for Christians that: "That earthly peace which arises from love of neighbor symbolizes and results from the peace of Christ who comes forth from God the Father. For by his cross the Incarnate Son, the Prince of Peace, reconciled all men with God. By thus restoring the unity of all men in one people . . . he slew hatred in his own flesh. After being lifted on high by his resurrection, he poured the Spirit of love into the hearts of men."[1]

The only path mankind can take to arrive at peace is to be open to God in a united vision of the world which recognizes that God is the only point of departure — and *the* point of arrival.

Peace is a gift from God since it is a "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal.5:22) and it must be desired, prayed for, willed and, therefore, merited by each people and individual.

The theme also presents the occasion to stress the links with and convergence between the great religions. It is faith in God, the basis for all common action in favor of peace, which unites us. Given the universal desire for peace among nations, this World Day of Peace offers the opportunity to confront the position of those who, either in theory or practice, deny religious freedom with the position of those who see precisely in this freedom, the necessary condition for any effective action favoring true peace. ●

1) Gaudium et Spes, 78.

Always, Immediately, with Joy

With the beginning
of a new year,
we would like to share
with our readers
these thoughts
of Chiara Lubich,
which helped many of us
during this past year.
They are words
that encourage us to go ahead
in this direction
in the days to come.

"My desire is that this be the year of our decisive start toward sanctity.

"We have seen that our motto 'always, immediately, and with joy,' contains the elements required to become a saint. Here in Rome, at the center of the Movement, we have committed ourselves to beginning this year, resolving to love Jesus Forsaken 'always, immediately, and with joy,' in every difficulty and trial, whether they be great or small.

"I would be very, very happy if also all over the world, as many members of the Movement as possible would begin the year in this way with us."

On January 2, 1981, Chiara wrote:

"The 'focolarini,' during their gatherings held around the feast of the Immaculate Conception and at Christmas, were struck by this idea: the love of Jesus Forsaken as the way to reach sanctity.

"In fact, the Church, before canonizing the saints, looks into their lives to see if they possessed heroic virtue. This means accepting all trials happily, every time, and immediately – even those trials which surpass human strength.

"If we have Jesus Forsaken as the ideal of our life, we will reach the point of possessing these virtues. In fact, Jesus' trial surpassed all human endurance; and we, given the occasion, must imitate him. If we have only him before us, we will undoubtedly love him every time he comes, immediately, and with joy.

"After having shared this conviction of mine with a focolarino, he replied with a motto that had been very helpful to us over the years: 'Always, immediately, and with joy.'

"This is the way then.

"This is what we have to do.

"Recently, Maria Gabriella of the Trappists in Grottaferrata – soon to be canonized – who gave her life for unity among Christians, and whom Foco[1] loved so much, gave me a hand.

"Reading her biography, based on her letters and on the testimony of others given for the cause of her beatification, I saw that she had become a saint only in the last two or three years of her life. Before that she had had a difficult personality, becoming easily impatient, angry and tending to be domineering. Then, she changed completely, acquiring perfect control over herself.

"If this is the case, then only a short time will suffice. It is enough to begin to love Jesus Forsaken always, immediately and with joy, within ourselves, in those around us, and in every circumstance." ●

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1) Igino Giordani, whom Chiara called a co-founder of the Movement, died in 1980. See Living City, Vol. 19, no. 7.

A Deepening Unity

Chiara Lubich visits Germany

Ecumenism,
initiatives and developments,
twenty years after the Focolare Movement
made its first contacts with
Evangelical Lutherans in Germany.

by GABRIELLA FALLACARA

"We must leave no stone unturned. We must do what unites. We are called to be witnesses of the Gospel, witnesses of Christ. His message requires us to bear witness together."[1] These words, spoken by Pope John Paul II in November 1980 in Mainz, Germany, to representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, were not the only ones which left a deep impression on all present, and particularly on Christians of the Lutheran faith.

Personally I was also impressed by the fact that many of the Lutheran bishops in Germany carry with them the texts of the Pope's ecumenical addresses given during his visit there. I saw, for instance, Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger open his briefcase during his conversation with Chiara Lubich last September 16, pull out a booklet, and quote from several of the Pope's speeches, including the one he had improvised before various representatives of different Christain Churches in Paris: "I must tell you that I deeply share in living this anniversary with you, this 450th anniversary of the 'Augsburg Confession.' I am following it in a way that I myself can hardly understand, for it is Someone in me who is following it. 'Someone will lead you.' These words, which the Lord spoke to Peter, are perhaps the most important of all the words he heard Jesus pronounce. 'Someone will lead you.' And I want to say also that my apostolic visit to Constantinople has given me much hope."

Someone might ask, "But where do we stand in this quest for unity among the Churches?" Many do recognize the Holy Spirit as the driving force toward unity: this is affirmed by bishops and theologians of various confessions who work on the theological commissions; it is witnessed by the anxious desire for unity which is felt more and more strongly among representatives of the various Traditions.

Due to its specific charism of unity, the Focolare Movement is also at work in this climate of renewed ecumenical hope. In less than forty years of life, it has reached more than 140 countries and, for the last twenty years, has spread to people of various Christian Traditions. In Europe alone, there are the Anglicans in Great Britain, the Reformed in Switzerland and Holland, and, of course, the Lutherans in Germany. In this nation there are about 11,000 members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who, together with over 65,000 Catholics, share the life of the Focolare in Munich, Regensburg, Nuremberg, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover and Heidelberg.

In these last months, Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, who first initiated its ecumenical contacts, has been extremely active. Last June, accepting an invitation by Dr. Robert Runcie, Primate of the Anglican Church in Great Britain, she went to London; in August she traveled to Switzerland, and the period of September 14 to 20 was spent in Germany, with a tight schedule of meetings with authorities of the Catholic as well as Lutheran Church, with young people and with families of the two Traditions.

Munich Airport. September 20, 1981: After a week filled with meetings and personal encounters with Lutheran friends known over a period of many years, after the planning of new ecumenical studies, and after meetings with Evangelical and Catholic personalities, Chiara Lubich is given an affectionate farewell. The joy of the fruits from the ecumenical week is shared by all.

Chiara Lubich met with Joseph Stimpfle, the Catholic bishop of Augsburg and Klaus Hemmerle, the Catholic bishop of Aachen, and had important conversations with Dr. Hermann Dietzfelbinger, former president of the German Lutheran Church and, at present, member of the joint commission for the dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. In Munich, she also met with Dr. Johannes Hanselmann, vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation and regional bishop of Bavaria.

I spoke with Dr. Hanselmann about his impressions right after this meeting. "I am very grateful for having met Chiara Lubich," he told me. "I had heard a great deal about her and read many of her writings. I think that the Focolare Movement can give a significant contribution towards Christian unity because of its efforts to unite in the right way all people who yearn for ecumenism. In this Movement, differences are not superficially overlooked; rather, all try to live together that which they have in common, as it was received by Christ himself, while at the same time, remaining faithful to their own Churches."

A powerful moment in Chiara's visit occurred on September 19, when she met with 1,500 members of the Focolare Movement in Friedberg's big City Hall Assembly Room: families, children and young people, Lutherans and Catholics who had come together from all corners of Germany. It was a memorable, immensely meaningful and open dialogue.

Chiara was asked many questions. The following are some of

Immediately upon her arrival, Chiara visits the ecumenical center of Ottmaring located near Friedberg in Bavaria. With her, among others, are Aldo Stedile and Bruna Tomasi, the Movement's national directors in Germany. At present there are twenty-two buildings and 130 permanent residents (among Lutherans and Catholics) living in the little city.

them: how should we live in order to achieve unity between our Churches? How should each of us live in order to reach union with God? How can we solve our family problems? What do you do when you realize that you have not done the will of God as you should have? Or if you have done something that is wrong? Someone else asked: What does it mean to you to meet great contemporary figures like Mother Teresa of Calcutta or Roger Schutz?

"Meeting people like these gives me great strength," was Chiara's reply to the last question. "Mother Teresa always tells me, 'that which you can do, I cannot do; and what I can do, you cannot do.' This is the great mystery of the Mystical Body of Christ, where each and everyone has his or her own task to fulfill, a task to which one must remain faithful."

The dialogue, which seemed like a personal conversation to those present, was a great source of joy for all. They experienced a renewed certainty in the words of Jesus, the Risen One, who promised to be present among Christians united in his name, so that the world may believe.

We caught one of Chiara's expressions as she formulated it: "I am often in contact with people who, because of the existing division, do not wish to hear about the Church. It is my impression that, if we go ahead like this, we have a great chance through our unity to give witness to God and to see many find him."

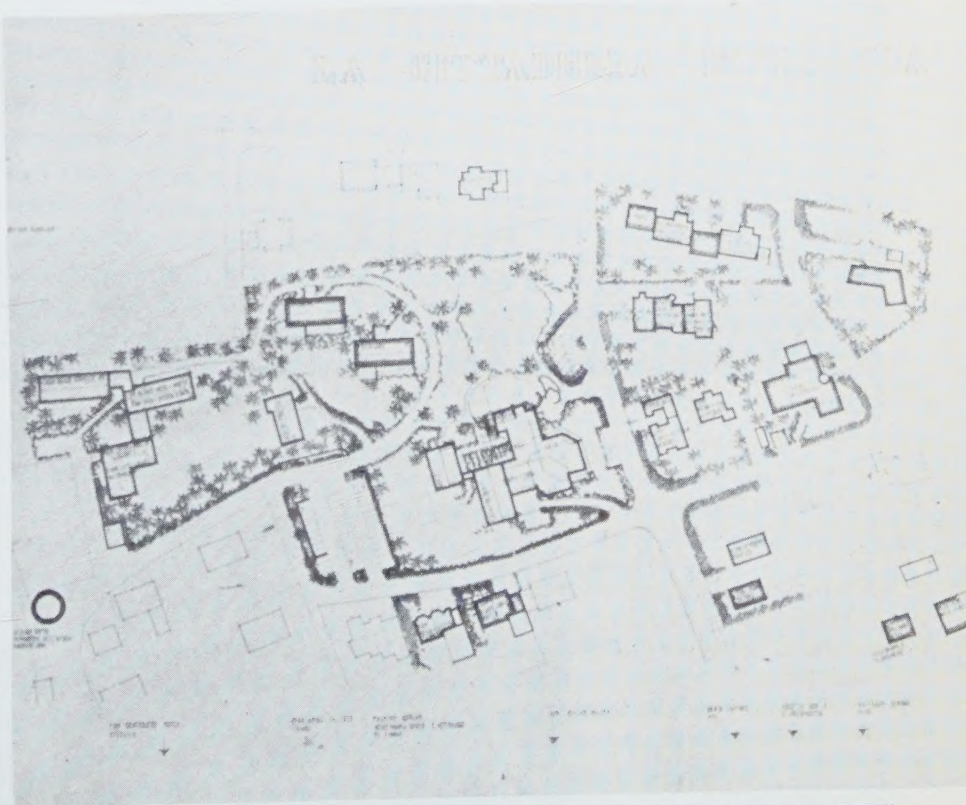
Ottmaring, the small ecumenical city near Augsburg, has welcomed 10,000 visitors this year, including twenty bishops. Its small community contributes towards building that which humanity most awaits: new men and women, people with an ideal of unity, who are able to live it, and who devote all their strength to introducing this life into all fields of human endeavor. Starting out by living the word of the Gospel every day, the Movement wants to give its own answer to God's invitation to unity, which is felt in a special way today.

"We, the Evangelical Lutheran Christians in particular," said Dr. Dietzfelbinger after speaking with Chiara Lubich in Ottmaring, "must take a very serious look at the Focolare Movement's spirituality, because it contains elements which would make us define it as a 'movement of re-awakening.' What we are most attracted to is this constant attention to God's word, this living the 'Word of Life.' This could be an essential contribution toward our understanding of the Catholic Church. And I think that this life based on living the Gospel could continue, in the future as well, to solve many difficulties between the

Chiara meets Lutheran Pastor Klaus Hess and his wife — affectionately known as "Mutti" (mother). They greet Chiara in the garden of the Focolare Center, and continue the important conversation in their own home close by. Later they were joined by Pastor Dieter Fürst and together came to certain important decisions. Much interest was given Chiara's idea of beginning informative courses on ecumenism.

Churches and shed new light on many things that have been forgotten for centuries."

During her stay in Germany, Chiara Lubich laid the groundwork for a new initiative: a series of ecumenical courses aimed at deepening the two Churches' mutual knowledge through the spreading of the Pope's speeches in Germany and through the study of the documents issued by the joint theological commissions. These ecumenical studies will be preceeded by giving the members of each Church the possibility of deepening their understanding of their own faith. To house the center for these courses, the small ecumenical city of Ottmaring is already equipped with the newly completed building named after Paul VI.



Map of the ecumenical mini-city of Ottmaring today, thirteen years after its inception. At left is the watertower, followed by houses belonging to the Lutherans. In the middle, the two Focolare Centers and the Mariapolis Center. At right, the homes of the families.

The Mariapolis Center of Ottmaring, built by architect Hans Gebauer, is particularly functional and attractive. Last year it was visited by ten thousand people.

ABOVE: September 17, Thursday afternoon, Chiara was received in Munich by Dr. Hanselmann, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Bavaria, one of the largest areas of Germany, and Vice President of the Lutheran World Federation. Dr. Hanselmann welcomed Chiara with great joy. He willingly obeyed the photographers, asking all present to pose for this "inevitable duty." Chiara Lubich and Eli Folonari at left, Dr. Hanselmann, center, and Dr. Hess at right. It was Chiara's first encounter with Dr. Hanselmann (whose position in the Evangelical Church corresponds to that of cardinal in the Catholic Church). Dr. Hanselmann was surprised and most grateful when he learned of the program of ecumenical studies. This, in fact, had been the theme of a recent convention of the Lutheran World Federation in Finland. He asked Chiara to open this new project also to the parishes.
LEFT: In front of the building of the Evangelical Council, Chiara greets a family of married focolarini with their baby and with other focolarini from Munich.

The professors will be chosen among those most competent in the two Churches. They will begin their work with preliminary meetings among themselves so that each Church's doctrine will be presented in mutual charity. Responsible for these courses will be the Catholic bishop of Bavaria, Joseph Stimpfle.

"I shall be very happy to contribute to these courses," said Lutheran Bishop Dietzfelbinger to Chiara Lubich.

The idea of these courses, which will not be limited to members of the Focolare Movement, was also the topic of a conversation between Chiara Lubich and Dr. Johannes Hanselmann. He showed particular interest, having just returned from the Lutheran World Conference in Finland where this very problem of how to spread the knowledge of the documents issued by the joint theological commissions was widely discussed.

To my question regarding what he thought of Chiara's initiative, Dr. Hanselmann replied, "In these last years, many commissions have made an effort not only to define the differences existing between the Churches, but also to eliminate them as far as possible. Among the most important documents, there is the one of the joint commission of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation, entitled 'The Eucharist' and another one on the ministry to be published shortly.

"We have always been dismayed by the fact that these excellent documents were so little made known to the parish communities.

"I think it is a wonderful idea to have these weekend courses at Ottmaring, a place where ecumenism is being lived, so that the faithful of the various parishes may get to know these documents. It is necessary to acquaint them with what is being elaborated on by the

(continued on page 11)

At the service of truth

An interview with Lutheran Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger

Q: When you met Chiara Lubich about thirteen years ago, and learned of the plan for an ecumenical center, what prompted you to give your blessing to this initiative? And now, at a distance in time, have your expectations been fulfilled?

A: If you want to build something for unity, it is best to put all of your convictions to the test through the daily difficulties in a community of life, and not limit yourself to the scientific reflections on the part of theologians who publish a document and then must leave the subject. In an authentic ecumenical gathering, there must be discussions on the differences existing for centuries, such as the misunderstandings, the changes in terminology, the problems of mixed marriages and of religious education for children. For me, it was an enormous help to see that — as opposed to other attempts — here both Lutherans and Catholics tried to build their life in unity, remaining united to the authorities of their respective Churches, and not in opposition to or detached from them.

Naturally it is much easier to establish a movement without the authorities of the Churches, but I think that one bears fruit only when working with the consensus of the Churches, remaining, therefore, in communion with the whole Church: suffering that which there is to suffer, praying together, respecting always the differences in tradition. Only in this way, can we reach a more profound communion.

Q: You are a member of the joint commissions for the theological dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics. What do you think is the future of these efforts towards unity, and which the contribution of an experience such as that of Ottmaring, given the prospectives opened up by the visit of Pope John Paul II to Germany?

A: I am an elected member of the Joint Theological Commission of the World Lutheran Federation and the Catholic Church. The Commission has published a document which is widely spread here and is translated into English under the title, "The Eucharist." I believe this to be one of the better interdenominational documents being used with interest in many Catholic and Lutheran groups. Often I have been asked to participate in discussions based on this document.

A second document, finished this year, is on the ministry of the Church. It is a very difficult theme and it will be interesting to see how it will be received when published shortly. I tried to contribute to these works by leaving no question or critical problem aside.

Regarding the future possibilities of these efforts, I think that we will achieve much through our patient and sincere research at the service of truth. This has been my experience of dialogue of twenty-five years: if we are impatient, if we hurry to take a step too fast, if we go ahead too quickly, we are bound to meet setbacks.

I think that it is important to talk together honestly. I realized precisely through dialogue with many Catholic bishops and cardinals that it is good to present with clarity each one's point of view in such a way as to reveal the lines of separation. In this way, with the grace of God, extraordinary things happen. Walls of division crumble. This experience seems to me very relevant in the ecumenical dialogue today. In this context, the center of Ottmaring is certainly of great importance with its ever increasing number of encounters, especially following the visit of Pope John Paul II. ●

In the "Paul VI" house, Chiara meets with Lutheran Bishop Dr. Dietzfelbinger (at right in photo), former President of the Evangelical Church in Germany and currently member of the Theological Commission for the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. It was a great joy for both to meet again after so many years. Also present was Bishop Stimpfle who introduced Bishop Hemmerle, Mrs. Irene Fürst and Pastor Fürst.

(continued from page 9)

leaders of the Churches and by theologians so that they, too, may work on and discuss these topics. All this gives us great hope for an ever closer communion among us."

But what are these ecumenical documents? They are the fruit of many years' work by theologians who, appointed by the leaders of both Churches, applied themselves to the profound study of how to reach unity. These 'working papers,' as these documents might also be called, present 'points of agreement' on topics which used to be

On the evening of September 15, Bishop Hermann Dietzfelbinger and Reverend Fürst celebrated the Holy Supper in the chapel of the Center.

The meetings continue. After visiting several Lutheran families, Chiara leaves the home of Pastor Dieter Fürst and his wife, Irene (at top of stairs).

In Friedberg's city hall, over 1,500 members of the Movement in Germany, Catholics as well as Evangelicals, gathered from all corners of the country. Hans Jurt welcomed Chiara and the focolarini who had accompanied her, Gis Calliari and Oreste Basso, Eli Folonari, Giuseppe Zanghi, Enzo Fondi, and Gabriella Fallacara.

controversial. They were published with explanatory notes by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. In order to reach a universal consensus so that these papers may be officially accepted by the Churches, the members of the commission are now collecting opinions from all Catholic and Lutheran bishops. It is clear, however, that if the faithful are never made aware of these 'points of agreement,' if they do not assimilate, evaluate and finally accept them, then much work done at the leadership level will find at the grassroots level, apathy, disinterest, disunity and old prejudices. There will be a discrepancy between the advances toward unity made through studies and people's lives.

The initiative of Chiara Lubich is a contribution towards establishing this general awareness, particularly among the young who — sensitive and eager for unity — are impatiently seeking the means to accomplish it. This could be seen in Friedberg, by the way the idea of this project was received by 1,500 members of the Movement.

The Vatican Radio, the "Roman Observer," "Avvenire,"and the Italian Television have all reported and broadcast the news of these ecumenical courses with great interest. Within the Focolare itself, during the Movement's leaders' meeting last Fall, further developments emerged on this subject: ecumenical courses in North America, Argentina, Brazil and Switzerland, while those in England had already been established during Chiara's previous trip to Great Britain.

(continued on page 15)

In the afternoon, after an intense day of interviews, Chiara, with Bishop Joseph Stimpfle present, concludes the program. It is a beautiful moment. The answer to each question is like a personal encounter with the person who asks it. Attention and joy reach their climax.

Spiritual ecumenism

A conversation with Catholic Bishop Joseph Stimpfle

Q: You have known the Movement since 1958, and have blessed and encouraged the birth of the little ecumenical city, Ottmaring. As bishop of this diocese, how would you evaluate these thirteen years; what is the outcome of this practical experience in ecumenism?

A: I have observed now for thirteen years the blossoming of this community. I think that its development has largely surpassed my own expectations, as well as those of others.

This development can be seen externally in the buildings which have been constructed here, in the number of families drawn here by this ecumenical ideal, in the many gatherings which, year after year, attract thousands of people from all over.

Looking then a little more in depth, this ecumenical center of life has also matured interiorly. The members of the Focolare Movement and the Brotherhoods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church not only have remained in unity, but have prayed and have shared the Word of Life in such a way that this experience has spread to others around them.

The ecumenical center has also received an indirect sign of recognition from the entire Bishops Conference of this country inasmuch as the Catholic bishops contributed a considerable sum of money for the construction here. Throughout the course of these years, various Catholic bishops from Germany as well as from other countries, including several cardinals present at different gatherings in Augusta, also visited Ottmaring.

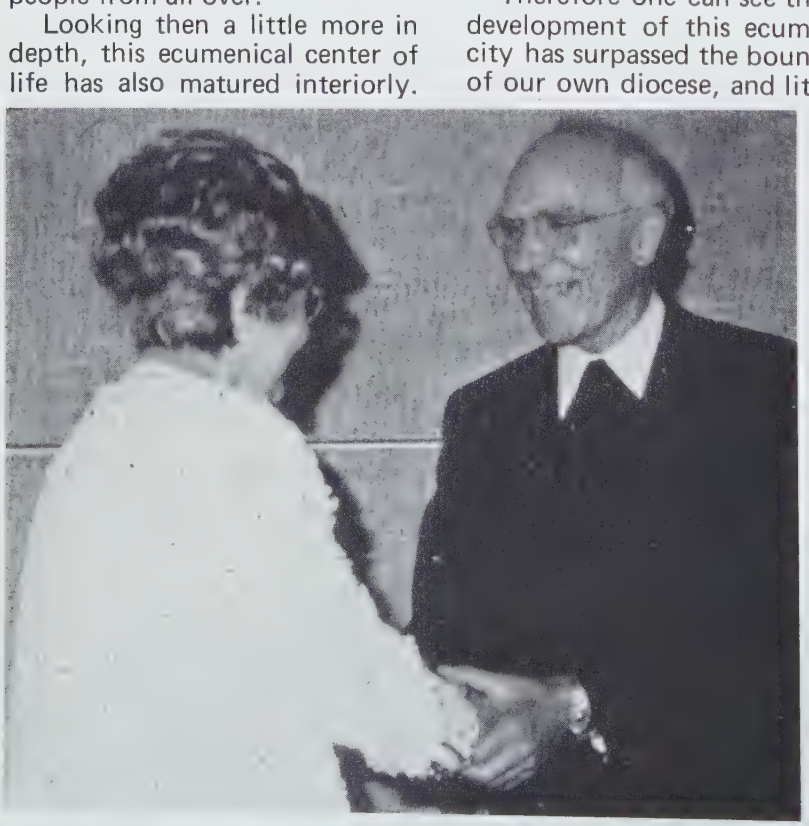
Therefore one can see that the development of this ecumenical city has surpassed the boundaries of our own diocese, and little by little, has stretched out beyon the Church in Germany. Toda Ottmaring can be considered a important point of reference fc ecumenical activity.

And finally, I would like t say that the development of th ecumenical center has had a d rect influence on our Churche The members of the Focolar Movement and of the Brothe hoods of the Evangelical Luthera Church, for example, also pa ticipate in ecumenical commi sions, or in workshops of th Christian churches in Bavaria, a well as all over Germany, givi in this way, a direct contributio to the development and deeper ing of the ecumenical life through out the whole Church in Ge many.

Q: Besides the various activitie which go on in Ottmaring, ther are also the meetings which yo have with the Lutheran bisho of the diocese. Could you tell u something also about this?

A: The ecumenical center i Ottmaring has drawn us for man years now to hold our meetin here regularly. Twice a year, rep resentatives of the Luthera Church of Augusta with the r gional deacon and representative of the Catholic Church, have me here for theological discussion

The atmosphere here and th place itself, help us to reach deeper mutual understanding. O ten after having had this happy e perience, in my whole diocese, i the parishes and deaneries, th contacts continue. Apart from few exceptions, an authentic ec menical climate exists everywhe in the diocese.



On behalf of all those present, the Bis op of Augusta, Joseph Stimpfle, w has known the Movement since 195 thanks Chiara Lubich for her worc "Striving for Sanctity Together" u the topic of the talk given at the Mar polis Center in Ottmaring. The 4 members of the Focolare Moveme present accepted the invitation who heartedly.

Q: Pope John Paul II's visit to Germany had an enormous ecumenical impact. What contribution do you think the experience of Ottmaring can give to future ecumenical developments here in Germany?

A: The apostolic visit of the Pope to Germany furnished for the first time the unique opportunity for Lutheran Christians to have a close contact with the Holy Father. The words and personality of the Pope produced a profound impression, as revealed by interviews, especially among practicing Evangelical Lutherans. In many of them one noted the beginning of a change of opinion regarding the Papacy itself.

In this situation, I hold that the ecumenical center of life can give a noteworthy contribution and bring to maturity these signs of life. The help which the focolarini of Ottmaring can give consists not only in the fact that they pray together with the Lutherans and that they value the Gospel so highly, but especially in the fact that they live together — in their daily life — the new commandment of Jesus, "Love one another as I have loved you." In this way, a model has emerged here which, without a doubt, can be applied to every parish community, to every ecumenical relationship between Lutheran communities and Catholics, to mixed marriages, to the collaboration between parish councils, and other organizations, etc. The ecumenical center of life, and especially the Focolare Movement with its experience and spirituality focused on unity, can give a valuable contribution to future ecumenical developments. The spiritual ecumenism that Chiara Lubich emphasizes, fulfilling so closely the desires expressed in the Council document on ecumenism, "Unitatis Redintegratio," brings about both a deeper understanding and a spiritual renewal on the theological level, as well as in the practical living out of our faith. •

October 11. Accompanied by 450 representatives of the Movement, Chiara Lubich, in a brief encounter with Pope John Paul II after the Angelus. He encouraged her to work in Germany.

(continued from page 12)

The rapid expansion of this program, which will of course vary according to the different countries, shows how strong the desire for unity is. It is kept alive at times while waiting and praying, or working in silence, without fanfare or publicity.

To the question, "Where do we stand in the quest for unity?" Dr. Hanselmann replied: "We need only look back into our history. All that we can experience today through our ecumenical exchanges would have been absolutely unthinkable thirty-five years ago.

"Even if something still separates and grieves us," he said, "I feel that we must not fail in our gratitude — indeed we must pray and believe and hope that God will bring us even closer to one another."

Gabriella Fallacara

1) English translation, L'Osservatore Romano, English edition, December 9, 1980.

"... by his incarnation, the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every human being."

Gaudium et Spes, Art. 22

("The Presentation" in terracotta by Ave Cerquetti, Centro Ave, Loppiano, Italy)

FAMILY LIFE

LOVE GOES BEYOND

Our first two children were born only ten and a half months apart, and now they are twelve and thirteen. Over the years they have always gotten along very well — have really been friends, as well as brother and sister. Of course, they have had their brief moments of rivalry, but never anything serious. (I couldn't say the same of the interrelationships among all our children!)

In recent months, however, these oldest of our children have been having some difficulty in getting along. "Well," I would say to myself, "It's just their age."

One evening I was preparing to meet with some of my friends. Just as I picked up my car keys, I heard loud noises and raised voices from upstairs. I went up to find my son and daughter in a fight — both physical and verbal. Their anger was intense, and I had some trouble separating them. Since they were to have been my babysitters for the evening, it was obviously not the case for me to leave, so I called my friends immediately to say I wouldn't be coming.

By now the "fight" was over, but the emotions were still at fever pitch. If I tried to talk calmly to my son, my daughter would yell, "You're always on his side." In fact, she went to her room to pack a suitcase; she was "leaving." Seeing her with a bump on her forehead and my son with a large scratch on his face, my own emotions began to rise. The I remembered I have only to love — that is always God's will.

When my daughter reached the front door with her suitcase, I just went out with her. We walked in the rain for quite awhile. Mostly, I just listened to all her complaints and tried to make myself one with her suffering. By now, she was frightened by how her emotions had gotten away on her and I tried only to console her.

When my son saw us returning arm-in-arm, he was now insulted that I had taken his sister's side in their argument. I sent her upstairs to unpack her bag, and again I listened, trying to make myself one. Finally, it seemed good to sit down with both of them. The beautiful outcome of trying to love moment by moment was a new understanding that my two adolescents gained about themselves and their emotions at this difficult time of their life. Together they were able to settle the minor difference of the evening; but more importantly, they reestablished that mutual love that goes beyond "adolescence." Of course, they continue to rub each other the wrong way and disagree vehemently, but never since that day have things gotten so out of control.

Y. T.

ENOUGH TO SHARE

We had had a very tight month financially. A substantial sum of money which my husband had earned and expected did not arrive and would be delayed several weeks. This put a hardship on us. Unexpected things happened — some bills were higher than ever, some came in at an unexpected time. Each day seemed to bring another expense, and I had the opportunity each day to remember this word of life: "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid!" I knew everything would work out eventually, but there were several worrisome moments. On top of this, we were told about a friend who was in need. We gave what we could because I believe that Jesus was asking us to be generous and to share even the little we had in that present moment: "Courage! It is I!"

Somehow, we got through the month. A little here — from our children, a little there — from unexpected jobs, etc. There was no large sum, but somehow we made it to pay the most pressing bills. It was a beautiful reminder that "all these things will be given to you" even in the smallest, quietest way. We had enough to get by and to share with others. There is such a sense of peace and fulfillment in my soul. R.L.

MOMENT BY MOMENT

One morning I had to leave the house very early and I knew I would be back after the family had returned. I was tempted to leave many things undone in order to be on time for my appointment. I had only one hour to get the children off to school and to do my various chores. I realized that my mind was racing ahead, and rushing around, I seemed to be accomplishing nothing. The word of life we were living was, "Your kingdom come." I decided to make tne choice of God over my anxieties and begin by doing the will of God in the present moment. First of all, it was to get the children out to school. I then tried to go about my work doing each chore with love, thinking of the others coming home to an atmosphere of harmony and order. Before I knew it everything was finished.

I left the house and still had quite a distance to drive. I began to worry again about being late. I was tempted to drive above the speed limit but then the word of life came back to me again, "Thy kingdom come." Over and over, all the way to my destination, I kept putting God first and did not exceed the speed limit. In the end I arrived for my appointment exactly on time. This experience reminded me once again that God is never outdone in generosity. R.D.

YES in the present

by CHIARA LUBICH

We are concluding here the publication of a series of talks given by Chiara Lubich on the will of God. In this excerpt she compares the experience of the Focolare Movement with what is found in the writings of some of the saints and the Second Vatican Council.

Let us now consider where, and by whom, we find God's will expressed. We have repeatedly seen that, first of all, we find God's will in Jesus: he is *the* model of Christian behavior. Furthermore, he is also the revelation of God's will for all humanity: he tells us what God wants from us as human beings.

The Second Vatican Council reminds us that " 'God our Savior . . . wishes [and, thus, Jesus wishes] all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2:3-4)."[29]

The Council further declares that all human beings are called to be one people and that this is likewise God's will.

"All men are called to belong to the new People of God. Wherefore this People, while remaining one and unique, is to be spread throughout the whole world and must exist in all ages, so that the purpose of God's will may be fulfilled. In the beginning God made human nature one. After His children were scattered, He decreed that they should at length be unified again" (cf. Jn. 11:52).[30]

Another aspect of God's will expressed in the Gospel is that we should see and love Jesus in all persons. The Last Judgment will be based on this point. The Council clearly affirms: "The Father wills that in all persons we recognize Christ our brother and love Him effectively in word and in deed."[31]

God also wants the unity of all Christians as brothers and sisters. In the words of John Paul II, "The will of Christ impels us to work earnestly and perseveringly for unity with all our Christian brethren. . . ."[32]

St. Therese of Lisieux writes:
"My life is a flash
of lightning,
an hour that passes,
a moment
that fast escapes me
and is gone.
My God,
you know that
to love you on earth
I have nothing
but today!"

We find God's will manifested in each day's events and situations, and in the responsibilities and circumstances of each of our lives. In this regard, the Council says:

"All of Christ's faithful, therefore, whatever be the conditions, duties, and circumstances of their lives, will grow in holiness day by day through these very situations, if they accept all of them with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father, and if they cooperate with the divine will."[33]

Christians must also read the will of God in the "signs of the times." This expression was frequently used by John XXIII and by the Council to indicate those events in which a Christian, enlightened by faith, can discern God's will in the course of history.

"The People of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord, who fills the earth. Motivated by this faith, it labors to decipher authentic signs of God's presence and purpose in the happenings, needs, and desires in which this People has a part along with other men of our age. For faith throws a new light on everything, [and] manifests God's design. . . ."[34]

We also find God's will expressed in the commands which Jesus has given us. And lastly, God's will is manifested to us by our superiors. Christians must look upon the words of the bishops as an expression of God's will because the bishops represent Christ. This is underscored by the Council:

"In the bishops . . . Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of those who believe. . . . Bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest. . . ."[35]

Paul VI points out that authority in the Church is not self-constituted but was instituted by Christ who said, "Who hears you hears me" (Lk. 10:16).[36] And in its decree on the religious life, the Council says:

"Religious, therefore, should be humbly submissive to their superiors, in a spirit of faith and of love for God's will, and in accordance with their rules and constitutions. They should bring their powers of intellect and will and their gifts of nature and grace to bear on the execution of commands and on the fulfillment of the tasks laid upon them. . . . In this way, far from lowering the dignity of the human person, religious obedience leads it to maturity by extending the freedom of [the children of God]."[37]

The saints regard the word of one's spiritual director or confessor as God's will. In the diary of Veronica Giuliani we read:

"Whenever I thought the Lord was commanding me to do something and was saying that this was what he wanted, and that on his behalf I should say this to the one who represented him, I would tell this to my confessors. But they almost always contradicted me. . . . Nevertheless, this gave me peace, for I felt that I could recognize God's will even more in what my confessor commanded than in what I had received in prayer." *38*

The compass that indicated God's will to us was "that voice," the voice within us, the voice of the Spirit. For with the coming of Jesus, God has written his law — which is his will — in our human hearts.

Paul exhorts us to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), and he says that "all who are led by the Spirit of God" are children of God (Rom. 8:14).

The Spirit has his own way of speaking to us and he makes his voice heard in our hearts.

At this point, however, we might wonder how non-Christians are able to discern God's will. In this regard, the Second Vatican Council states that, in addition to Divine Revelation, there is another privileged means for perceiving God's will which every person possesses: conscience.

"In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God . . . (cf. Rom. 2:14-16)." *39*

Here is what Paul VI says about this voice:

"Is there a duty that exists independently of the obligations deriving from the laws of society? Yes, there is; and it springs from within us: it is the voice of conscience. We all hear it . . . and it says to us: 'You must! . . .' But this is not simply an innate impulse, a part of our psychological makeup: its source is a higher principle, a transcendent will, which re-echoes within us, interpreting and guiding our being in conformity with the divine mind. For God wants us to be as he conceived us to be, so that we may reach the fullness of our true nature, a nature that is free and progressing, designed to lead us to our fulfillment and to the merging of our lives with his wise and loving plan." *40*

The Lord taught us to live the present moment in various ways. In the Gospel, for instance, it is evident that we should live the present moment. For we find there that we are to ask the Father for bread only for "this day" (Mt. 6:11); we are told, "Today has troubles enough of its own" (Mt. 6:34); and we are warned: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62).

The saints, too, encouraged everyone to live the present moment. Catherine of Siena used to say, "The fatigue of the past is no longer ours, because its time has gone; what is to come we do not possess, because we are not sure if its time will ever come." *41*

Another saint who stands out in this regard is the third century abbot, Anthony. One of the principal points in his teachings was: to begin anew "today," in purity of heart and obedience to God's will. This is brought out in his biography, written by Athanasius of Alexandria.

"He himself took no account of the time which had passed, but day by day, as if beginning his ascetical life anew, he made greater efforts to advance, constantly repeating to himself Saint Paul's saying, 'I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come' (Phil. 3:13-14). He also recalled the words of the Prophet Elias who said, 'As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I shall present myself before him today!' (1 Kings 18:15)." *42*

Therese of Lisieux is an expert on how to live the present moment.

"Let us turn our single moment of suffering to profit, let us see each instant as if there were no other. An instant is a treasure. . . . *43*

"My life is a flash of lightning, an hour that passes, a moment that fast escapes me and is gone. *My God, you know that to love you on earth I have nothing but today!* *44*

" A moment at a time, you can endure quite a lot. *45*

"I'm suffering only for an instant. It's because we think of the past and the future that we become discouraged and fall into despair. *46*

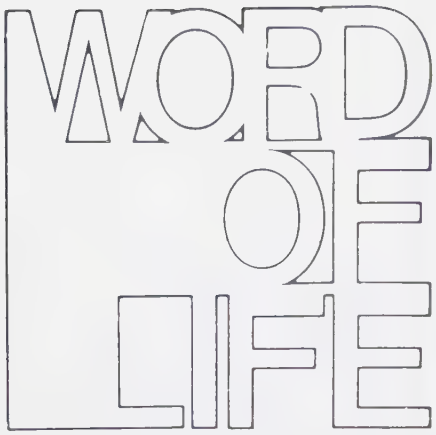
"This isn't like persons who suffer from the past or the future; I myself suffer only at each present moment. So it's not any great thing." *47*

Frances Xavier Cabrini wrote this beautiful piece of advice in one of her letters: "Now what is done is done. Do not live in the past but in the present, and always look ahead to see what virtues you should practice in order to become a saint, a great saint, and soon too." *48*

And the popes are of one mind with the saints. John XXIII lived by the following norm:

"I must do everything, say every prayer, obey the Rule, as if I had nothing else to do, as if the Lord had put me in this world for the sole purpose of doing that thing well, as if my sanctification depended on that alone, without thinking of anything else." *49*

Excerpt taken from *Our Yes to God*, New City Press, New York, 1981.
For footnotes 29 to 49 see pages 114-115 in Our Yes to God.



"May all
find their home
in you,
O God."

(Psalm 84)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"May all find their home in you, O God" (See Psalm 84).

We are all aware of the vast religious development that characterizes our times, and that involves almost all the Christian Churches. The followers of Christ, weary of the divisions that have arisen down through the centuries, are beginning to move towards reunification. Certainly, behind this desire for unity and this thrust toward unification is the Holy Spirit, who continually suggests various courses of action that Christians should follow.

For example, seeing the difficulty of this undertaking, the Holy Spirit invites us to pray. Thus Christians dedicate a week in January as a time of prayer to God for unity. And each year they choose a Word of Life to guide them in this journey they have set out on together. For this year, it is:

"May all find their home in you, O God."

These words are inspired by Psalm 84, which gives voice, as one commentator says, to "the ardent desire of the Israelites, when they returned from exile, to go up to the Temple, where their trials would be transformed into blessings and a dispersed people would find its unity again in the one God."[1]

The exodus and exile of the Israelites, however, as perhaps you already know, are not simply events in the history of this people. They also depict a reality lived by the Church in this world. In fact, Christians, too, walk as pilgrims — not through a desert towards an earthly land and a material temple– but towards their true homeland, Heaven.

"May all find their home in you, O God."

And what is the path that leads Christians towards this goal? The path is Jesus himself. When the Apostle Thomas asked, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."[2]

Therefore, if Jesus is the way that leads to our true homeland, then we must live *in* him. This is possible because, through our faith and baptism, we are already in him. And, since all of us Christians are in him, we are close to one another — we become brothers and sisters.

It is essential, then, that we do everything possible to avoid breaking this bond that unites us. But we must also go further, endeavoring to make up for past failings and misunderstandings, to relieve tensions, to remove divisions. We must live our Christian life in an attitude of mutual respect and welcome one another with love.

Since Jesus is the way, we Christians can "walk" in him if we model our relationships on the type of rapport that binds true families together. "The love, brotherhood, trust, solidarity, and unity that

1) Father Eleuterio Fortino, Secretariat for Christian Unity (own translation).
2) John 14:5-6.
3) Fortino, Secretariat for Christian Unity (own translation).

ought to characterize the life of a family can also help us understand the type of rapport that should exist among the members of the Church." [3]

"May all find their home in you, O God."

This desire will be fully realized in the next life, where God — no longer content with establishing his dwelling in the midst of his people — will bring us into his own "tent," i.e., in the fullest intimacy with the Father.

Then God will be present everywhere, and we will be able to contemplate him face-to-face.

But even now we can experience this reality — though in a veiled way — because Jesus has promised to be present where two or three Christians are united in his name. For he is truly "Emmanuel": "God with us."

"May all find their home in you, O God."

We can live this word of life by loving one another so that Jesus may have the joy of seeing us discover him present in our midst.

If we do this, soon our tiny community of love will become a source of life that will attract many, because — as Jesus said — if we are one, the world will believe.

CHIARA LUBICH

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Gospel.

THE TASK OF LOVING

For many years I have been a teacher at a Brooklyn school in which there are numerous difficult problems. Several months ago a seriously maladjusted girl was assigned to one of my classes. She attended school sporadically and always arrived without books or writing materials; she did nothing more than stare into space. Her behavior gave me cause for great concern since the rest of the class possessed such an unrestrainable vivacity. They were always in motion.

For me it was such a battle to maintain discipline with a more or less gentle tone of voice while spitballs flew and students shouted to each other back and forth across the room. It was a difficult class. In the midst of all that hubbub sat this girl, silent, forlorn, with her thoughts far away. I knew that it was she who presented the really grave problem. It was she whom I would have to love most.

"The members are many, but the body is one" (1 Cor. 12:20). The word of life reminded me that we are all bound together and that each one has his or her own task.

What could have been the task of this student who was so lost and indifferent? Only love would provide me with the light to understand it.

After weeks and weeks of effort to make her aware of my concern for her and my sincere interest in her, after conferences with the guidance counselor and assistant principal, and after having telephoned her mother in vain to acquaint myself with the family situation, there finally seemed to be a ray of hope.

One day the entire class accompanied me to New York City (Manhattan) to visit some of the most important buildings. For that occasion my little friend showed up neatly dressed, bursting with excitement. Throughout the day she remained close beside me, talking, smiling and showing interest in everything that happened. She seemed like another person and I had the impression of having conquered her, but at school the next day, there she was, plunged back again into her absolutely stubborn silence.

"The members are many, but the body is one." I would not become discouraged. The only thing necessary was to begin to love again and to make my love more concrete. Assisted by my colleagues, I sounded the charge again towards the mother who finally arrived at school. This very young and glamorous lady told me in front of the child, who listened silently, that she herself was attending the university and that our twelve-year-old student, not functioning at home either, refused to groom herself or to give any attention to the young baby left in her care. The conference was a disaster. It seemed that all my efforts had been shattered.

But I would not desist. Returning to class, I began to talk with the girl although it seemed that she never listened to me. I wanted to console her, but I didn't know how. Then I told her that I would always continue trying to help her. I noticed that she was attentive while I told her that I loved her just as much as I loved the other students and that I would continue trying, in every way, to discover what her talents were, what her gift for us was. I told her that I wished to help her to make an adjustment to life so that she could function at home and everywhere else, not just in my classroom.

The child said nothing, but I was certain that she would try to do something.

With new hope and courage I tried again the next day, inducing her to engage in oral competition which consisted of memorizing a dialogue in Spanish, the language which I teach. To the surprise of all, my little friend performed

with excellence; in fact, she was one of the best.

Seeing her so happy and proud, I tried to give the event maximum importance. I felt elated and thought to myself, "This time we did it." But only a few days later, we were right back where we started from.

What could I do with such a youngster who would withdraw into herself like an ostrich, who continued to stare into space, who would give us hope one day and then fall back again into her mood of being totally absent the very next day? I felt that my hope was beginning to diminish, but still the words, "The members are many, but the body is one," gave me no peace.

I would start all over again with renewed hope.

Again I took her aside and asked her to cooperate. "Weren't we friends," I asked her. Her unexpected reaction left me speechless.

As tears rolled down her face, she began striking the desk with her fists and screaming that she hated me, all the other teachers and all the students, that she despised the school and didn't want to see us ever again. "Why? Why?" I asked in anguish and astonishment.

She yelled between sobs that the students hated her and that she didn't like the way we treated her.

The class sat motionless. The scene grew in intensity, and I had to call a supervisor for help.

The child was carried out of the room. For moments I stood there, speechless, looking at the students. It was I who finally began to speak.

In a public school, as mine is, one does not talk about God nor his will, but I thought to myself, "I can talk about love." Thus, I began to tell my students that we had to love one another.

They had seen with their own eyes the suffering of people who feel that they are not loved. During the rest of that hour we reviewed all that had happened from the time that youngster had entered our class. One by one the students admitted having been guilty of mistreating her in very subtle ways.

As language students they knew that I would be with them only four class periods per week. However, they assured me that they were taking full responsibility for doing whatever might be necessary in order that our little friend would find love and trust in our class.

We made a pact, as even they had understood that to love is what really counts in life.

When my class returned to my room twenty-four hours later, the students were not the same; and even our little friend was a different person. Now, for the past two months, she has worked well, listening, responding to questions and requesting help; in other words, she is a student like all the others.

Now I understand better why she came among us, what her task was in this little community of students so traumatized by difficult family and racial situations. She was the catalyzing element which has made it so that mutual love is being lived in this class today.

A. R.

THAT LAST VISIT

Sue seemed more distressed than I had seen her during the past few weeks. The word of life we were trying to live, "He had loved his own in this world, and would show his love for them to the end" (John 13:1), came to my mind. I asked a little timidly since we had been friends a short time, "How are you, Sue?" Immediately she began to tell me that she had gone to the hospital to visit a friend who was dying.

She began to cry, telling me all about her young friend who was alone and quite depressed. "It's hard to visit her," Sue added, "because what can you say?"

I had already shared with Sue the word of life. It seemed the moment to remind her of it, but above all, to find every way possible that I myself could live it with her.

After having listened to Sue " . . . to the end," I felt urged to offer to go to visit Sue's friend with her. As the girl had just been admitted to the hospital and didn't seem in any imminent danger, we decided to go together at the end of the week. Sue liked this idea. I went back to my desk thinking I had done as much as I could. Then a thin doubt came to my mind: I wonder if her friend (whom I had learned was Catholic) had been in touch with a priest? In fact, when I went back to ask Sue, she thought that probably no one had looked into that. "She doesn't have much of a family," Sue said. "I doubt that there's anyone to think of those things."

I remembered that I knew a priest who was one of the chaplains at the same hospital. Sue thought it was a good idea to try to reach him.

With my first call to the chaplain's office they told me that he was celebrating Mass and would then be leaving the hospital immediately, not to return for several days. I was tempted to "let it go"; it didn't seem that urgent and I could just as well call him when he got back. The word of life came to mind again, " . . . to the end" meant "to the end" in this moment. I remembered that Mass at the hospital usually finished around 4:00 p.m. If I timed it right, I could reach him by page before he walked out. I made several attempts. Just when I was almost sure I had missed him, Father came to the phone. He assured me that he would visit Sue's friend.

Friday came, the day of our planned visit to the hospital. Sue called me early to say she was sorry, but it really looked like her schedule wouldn't permit her to go; we'd go on Monday.

Saturday morning, I received a call from the chaplain's office. It was the priest. Sue's friend had died suddenly early Friday evening. He had stopped in to see her almost immediately after I called, and had found her very distressed and anxious. "But we talked for some time," he told me. "We even prayed together, and in the end, she received Communion." Then Father went on to tell me that he had asked another priest to visit her Thursday, and she had received the Sacrament again; he was with her

(continued on page 28)

BRAZIL: The forgotten majority

It is a hot morning in San Paolo. Along the busy streets, the scorching sun almost blinds me from seeing the colorful signs, sophisticated stores, the coffeeshops and huge supermarkets, the glass skyscrapers, the luxurious, air-conditioned cars speeding by.

The people move along against this background. The sidewalk is so crowded that I have a hard time going ahead. It is a shock to look at the crowds; the majority of these people are in complete contrast to the city in which they live. Shabbily dressed workers, mothers weighed down with bags, abandoned children left to their own destiny. I see tiredness, hunger, illness. In this city, nothing was designed with them in mind. Only a few are able to enjoy the luxuries of this city — those who have all they need, and more. This situation makes the abyss separating these two worlds evident; they are worlds which ignore each other.

The lack of actual physical room for the poor reflects the lack of space for them in the minds and hearts of those who happened to be born into the rich or middle classes. Why is it so hard to make them aware of one another when they live side-by-side?

Perhaps this indifference is rooted in the economic history of Brazil, dating back to the era of its colonization. Certainly the goal of the 16th century merchants was concentrated solely on satisfying the demands made by the European market. It is enough to remember how enormous tracts of land in Brazil were divided up by the King of Portugal and distributed to his allies, generally those belonging to the small Portuguese 'middle class.' Together with these land grants almost unlimited power was granted, the only obligation being the delivery of a certain quantity of goods to the foreign market.

A glimpse of San Paolo: The Brazilian city, due to its chaotic and unlimitable growth, seems from up high like any other modern city. It is only when immersed in the crowds of the city that the contrast between the two worlds flares to sight.

At that time cane sugar was the number one export, so cane sugar was produced. However, when the indigenous work force could no longer meet the demands being made, instead of instructing the workers or developing new crops more suited to the work force and conditions, the African slave trade was begun. Thousands of slaves, considered like any other commodity, were imported.

In the 18th century as the sugar market declined, other products, regulated by the new demands of the foreign market, were emphasized, including coffee, gold, precious stones and rubber.

The urgent necessity to meet these demands on time provoked, among many other disadvantages, periodic mass migrations to parts of the country where new economic possibilities — always based on the interests of colonialism — were offered.

Living in Brazil, one has the impression that this colonialistic mentality still exists today among the various strata of Brazilian society. On one hand, there are the wealthy owners of the "engenho"[1] who enjoy all the advantages of their wealth; on the other hand, there is the anonymous majority, without any real rights. They hold menial jobs, or are unemployed; they are the outcasts of every kind, whose human dignity and value is ignored.

And the migrations still continue. Farmers abandon their land for the big industrial cities, driven by hunger, or drought, by poor pay, or floods. Some are attracted by the glitter of the metropolis where wealth is presented as the only good, and the rich as the ideal human being. Others leave because the land is sold to large companies or to wealthy landowners who invest in highly advanced farm machinery.

All these people, some who came on their own initiative, some driven, at times brutally, from the country, find themselves in the most precarious living conditions: on the streets, under viaducts, in swamp areas, or in the "mocambos" and "favelas," those conglomerates of shacks which have cropped up in all the big cities, often right behind huge apartment buildings and skyscrapers. These slum areas are not prepared to absorb the many people arriving from the rural regions. In fact, although the rate of industrialization and urbanization in Brazil is one of the fastest growing in the world, the rate at which the local work force is utilized is one of the slowest.

These people are not considered as part of the city. In the favelas and mocambos, the extreme poverty leads to violence, immorality and drug abuse.

Given this situation, one can easily understand why the Church in Brazil does everything possible to encourage the government to interest itself in these people who live on the fringe of society. As it was stated at the Bishops Conference in Puebla, the Church does not want "... the rich to get richer at the expense of the poor who get ever poorer."[2]

Unfortunately, however, recent statistics indicate that this phenomenon is actually worsening. In 1970 the rich (about 20% of the population) benefited from 62.24% of the national revenue; the middle class (about 30% of the population), 22.85%, and the poor (50% of the population), 14.91%. The 1976 statistics show a turn to the worse: the rich had reached 67% of the national revenue; the poor, 11.8%.

The situation is painful; it makes one want to do something. What is most dismaying is the total lack of a sense of community, of equality. This mentality evaluates the needs of the rich (studies, housing, etc.) in a different light than it does the needs of the poor. With a strange logic, it is taken for granted that the poor who live in poverty, and suffer in poverty, will continue to live and suffer in poverty.

Even today, most house servants do not receive the same food as those whom they serve, nor are they paid for their work, nor do they receive a pension, etc. The excuse one hears is, "We consider them as part of the family." This attitude causes at times a situation of real slavery, as well as a high rate of prostitution.

Although this is a Catholic country, the gap between faith and the practice of one's beliefs is so great that the very idea of the poor being our brothers and sisters — according to the plan and will of God — is simply not accepted. If it were, all the relationships among people would be revolutionized. But how can this realization be achieved? It is difficult for rich and poor alike. This is why the Church in Brazil often speaks out for those who cannot speak for themselves, calling upon everyone to help. She insists on the necessity of helping the poor to become aware of their basic rights.

In reality, however, there are two groups to be educated. Everything possible must be done to reach the

Two worlds live side-by-side, seeming to ignore each other. The great city, with its skyscrapers, supermarkets and highways, wasn't planned for a populace undermined by exhaustion, hunger and sickness.

Those who leave the countryside for the city find the most precarious living conditions in the conglomerate of slums which lack any internal organization and are infested with all the problems born of misery, immorality and drug abuse.

rich as well, to make them too aware of their responsibility. There are committed Christians who do work at this two-fold effort, with some results. Perhaps the fruits may seem sporadic, or few, but every change begins from a seed.

Some facts come to my mind. I remember a woman who, as owner of a farm, employed seven workmen part-time. The hot climate, ignorance, poverty, and alcoholism often produce such apathy among the workers that they are almost unable to work. Consequently, for the employer, it is considered charity to hire them; for the workers, the job is only a means to avoid starvation.

This woman, having understood her responsibility to work towards a true brotherhood, decided to see these workers with new eyes. The method she chose to find a remedy to the situation was unique: she went to work side-by-side with them where they were digging to build a new road.

She noted immediately that there was no relationship among them, and that they often fought. She refused to be discouraged, resolving to accept them as they were. She asked their advice, helped them to participate in the decision-making process of the work, being convinced that they too were children of the same Father, and therefore, her brothers. Little by little, the wall that had existed in her, without her even realizing it, began to crumble. Then she went a step further, taking an interest in their families. She found herself face-to-face with real hunger. Stunned, she asked herself, "How could I have lived so many years next to them and never have realized this? If they are my brothers, I must treat them as such, and make it possible for them to eat, dress properly, and have a decent home."

At times the old mentality would come back to her, "Should I help them — even if they don't know how to work, even if they spend their money irresponsibly?" She would answer herself, "If they don't know how to work, it is because no one ever taught them." And she began to discover for the first time the real causes behind the problems, and to understand how deceiving was the logic of her old mentality.

With this new awareness, she felt the first step was to double their salary. She did so, with a heart filled with gratitude to God for having opened her eyes to the grave injustices she would have perpetuated, thus risking to hear at the end of her life those terrible words, "I was hungry and you gave me no food . . ."(Mt. 25:42).

Other owners, drawn by her example, did the same. One manufacturer did not only double his workers' salary. After having seen that they had neither enough food for lunch, nor a decent place to eat, he provided for both, and urged his fellow businessmen to do likewise.

I have seen unthought of changes take place among the poor when they become aware of their own dignity, and realize that they too can participate in the transformation of socitey. For instance, a group of people living in the favelas were threatened by eviction. They chose to talk with the public authorities, even though they had been incited by many to rebel. All together they chose a few representatives to bring their proposals on how to resolve the situation to the mayor. Many derided their initiative, judging it to be too idealistic, but the calm and serene manner with which the people of the favelas presented their point of view resulted in success.

Another case. Thirty other families were notified to leave their homes because the land on which they were living had been sold. They too chose to talk with the owner who, realizing his responsibility as a Christian, decided to distribute 1000 acres among the families.

Another person gave another 500 acres for families who found themselves in similar situations. Still others, active in Christian movements, decided to share their land with those who had nothing.

An heir to an immense estate, opening his eyes to the tragic situation of the poor, was revolted at the thought of keeping his wealth for himself. After having found work for all the people who had been living on his land, he sold his property and used the profit to promote social betterment projects in the area.

These episodes remind me of the words of the Magnificat: "To the hungry he has given every good thing, while the rich he has sent empty away" (Lk. 1:53).

The Gospel is capable of bringing about such a change. But we have to continue to work if we want to see this mentality take root among many. ●

1) Sugarcane plantation.
2) Puebla Final Document, Paragraph 30.

The very young and the Gospel

I was in the cafeteria getting ready for lunch. The girls went first that day. Cynthia was late and she was at the end of the line behind all the boys. I was at the front of the boy's line, and I wanted to be the first to get my lunch. Then I saw Cynthia, and to love her and Jesus in her, I just let her go in front of me.

Arend

Today in school I had a piece of paper in my hand and my teacher told me to throw it out. And I threw it out immediately and this made her happy. I was happy too because I knew this was the will of God for me.

*

I took down a picture that my brother Michael made and dropped it and it broke. But then I loved Jesus and I apologized and I fixed it with scotch tape because I wanted to love Michael. Michael loved me back by accepting my apology in a nice way. That was my hundredfold.

Mary

*

One day I had to stay after school for singing. In singing we were all in the room and we were supposed to get up from our seats to go to the middle of the room. There was a girl sitting with me on the same chair because there wasn't enough chairs and we were both very cramped. I really wanted to get up first because I was so cramped. But I knew she did too, so I let her get up first because I wanted to love Jesus in her.

Jodi

This morning I was emptying out one of Katie's boxes of clothes and everything was so cute. After that my sister asked me to fold all the clothes. I didn't want to and then I said to myself, this isn't love. I have to love Jesus and so I did it immediately.

Colleen

This morning my Mom told me to clean up the basement. I really didn't want to do it because it was so messed up with lots of papers around. But I cleaned it up anyway to love Jesus in my Mom.

Jennie

Once when I was already at school and I was playing barbershop and there was another boy who wanted to play. So I got out of the game and gave him a chance to play because there was Jesus to love there in him.

Maureen

*

When I woke up, I made my bed and I fixed the things on my shelves and I cleaned up my brother's dressers. I wanted to love everybody.

Matthew

A SCHOOL FOR MARIAN STUDIES

Jesus Christ, *the first volume of essays has been compiled for the one-year-old School for Marian Studies, and will soon be available. This school is one expression of the Marian School of the Focolare Movement, which, in its broader context, comprises all that has been studied within the Movement and all the wisdom existing in it.*

These last few years have witnessed an ever-increasing interest in the figure of Jesus Christ — among theologians in their scholarly debates, exegetes in their research, young people in their loneliness or search for a "lost utopia," intellectuals who discover it fashionable, politicians who find it useful. . . . And we could continue.

Amidst all of this, in reality, who is Jesus Christ? What can we learn of him from the Gospel, and how reliable is it historically? What are the "unspoken signs" that indicate a search for Christ in our modern day culture? These are the questions focused on in "Jesus Christ" a new book published by Citta' Nuova, and compiled by the Marian School of the Focolare Movement.

The contributors are from a variety of countries and comprise in part the faculty of the Marian School inaugurated little over a year ago (see *Living City*, Vol. 20, no. 1).

The book is first in a series, to be followed by others about "God," and "The Church."

This first book about Jesus Christ is composed of several sections, each distinct from the other, yet bound by an identical intention among the authors — that of being united in the name of Jesus, in order to have him present in their midst as they put it together. (See Mt. 18:20). "And this," affirms Professor Giuseppe Zanghi, rector of the School, "urges all to continually share the results of their research, their ideas, and studies — to let go of them and find them again continually, in unity with the others, with Jesus in the midst. . . ." In other words, they work in a team, allowing themselves to be guided by the One who desires to be present among those united in His name.

The first section of the book centers on the figure of Jesus in the Old and New Testaments and includes excellent essays by Gerard Rosse and Maria Magnolfi on Jesus in the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke and John.

The second part is devoted to the Church's understanding of Jesus: in the writings of the Church Fathers, in medieval theology and spirituality, and in contemporary theology (including Barth, Bultmann, Rahner, Culmann, Balthasar, Duquoc, Florevsky and the political Christologies of the liberation movement). The most original contribution in this second section is found in Jesûs Castellano Cervara's study on the great trends of spiritual life which, although often neglected in the study of theology, have made an even greater contribution to the understanding of Christ than the work of the theologians. Among these he cites St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, the Christ-centered spiritualities of St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Gertrude and St. Catherine.

The third part explores the mystery of Jesus and Mary. According to Judy Povilus and Alba Sgariccia, one thing is certain: we cannot speak of Christ without speaking of Mary. She is the one who was constantly at his side — from the Annunciation by Gabriel, to that by the angels in Bethlehem, until the moment when she stood at the foot of the cross, to Pentecost . . .

The last section deals with the moral message of Christ and attempts to answer two questions: what is the relationship between the ethical teaching of Christ (for example, the Beatitudes) and the various moral codes that exist? What is the meaning of Jesus, God made man, in spiritual life, in asceticism, and in mysticism?

In conclusion to this study of patristic, theological, spiritual and moral topics, the book also focuses on the importance of Christ in con-

(continued on page 28)

October 15, 1980, the inauguration of the Marian School of the Focolare Movement.

EXPERIENCES

(continued from page 22)

when she died on Friday. "She was at peace; she had found her peace with God," he said.

I had no way of reaching Sue over the weekend. I wondered how she would take the sudden death of her friend. Would she feel badly about the cancelled visit? I wanted to give her the consolation of the priest's words.

Early Monday morning, Sue came to my desk. She wanted to tell me that her friend had died. "But you know," she said, "I told you I couldn't see her Friday, but coming home I felt so strongly that I should stop in just for a quick visit. It wasn't like the other times. She was very sick, but not depressed, and I was able to help her a little. Just think, I was the last one to see her before she died!"

Then I shared with Sue what the Chaplain had told me. She was visibly happy as she told me, "I have such a peace that everything worked out the way God wanted; and I'm certain of his love for her."

M. V.

A SCHOOL FOR MARIAN STUDIES

(continued from page 27)

temporary culture, in philosophy and literature (Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Dostoevski), in Marxism and psychoanalysis.

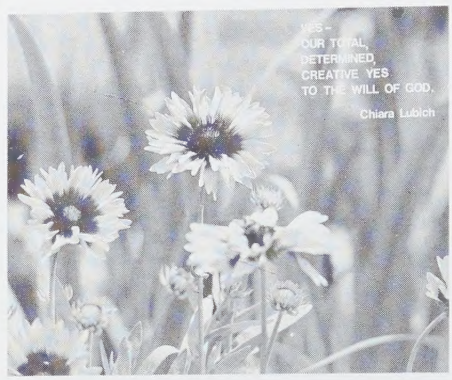
Someone might ask, "But why another book on Christ? What does it say that has not already been said?" Apart from it being a fruit of a new way of working, that is, a team trying to keep Jesus in their midst, Professor Zanghi explains, the volume strives to study those often neglected problems which have arisen around the figure of Christ throughout the entire span of Church history, up until the present day, including the theological, philosophical and cultural debates over the humanity and divinity of Christ.

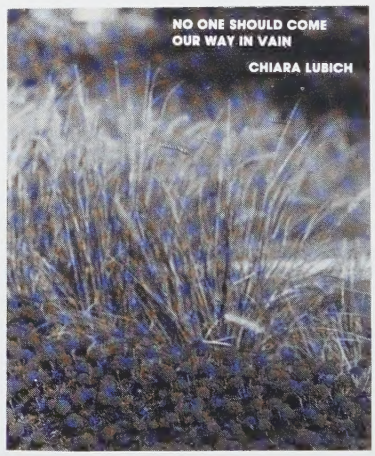
It is a valid instrument, both for scholarly exploration as well as for a deeper personal encounter with Christ.

Francesco Meloni

Focolare posters

A variety of posters, both color and black and white, are available at all the Focolare Centers. The latest two are in color (15"x18"). All of the posters can be ordered by mail from:
Focolare Movement, P.O. Box 496, New York, NY 10021.





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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

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First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

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